

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5673
AMEMBASSY BUJUMBURA PRIORITY
INFO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM
AMEMBASSY KINSHASA
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 KIGALI 0097

DEPT PASS AID/USIA/PC

NAIROBI ALSO FOR REDSO/EA

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PDEV, PGOV
ECON, RW
SUBJECT: TRENDS IN RWANDA: ASSESSING THE HABYARIMANA GOVERNMENT

1. SUMMARY:

AS 1977 ENDS, THE LEADERSHIP OF PRESIDENT JUVENAL HABYARIMANA IS WELL ESTABLISHED. HIS "MILITARY, BUT NOT MILITARIST" GOVERNMENT HAS THE RESPECT OF ALL MAJOR ELEMENTS OF RWANDAN SOCIETY, ALTHOUGH PARTICULAR POLICIES ENGENDER CONTROVERSY AND OCCASIONAL ARTICULATED DISAGREEMENT WITHIN THE LEADERSHIP. THE EMPHASIS ON DEVELOPMENT HAS YIELDED SOME FRUIT; FOREIGN ASSISTANCE HAS CLIMBED TO RECORD LEVELS. THE FOREIGN POLICY INITIATIVE CALLED
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"OVERTURE" HAS BEEN SUCCESSFUL, IN THAT RWANDA HAS DECENT RELATIONS WITH ALL ITS DIFFICULT NEIGHBORS, SOME SLIGHT MODERATING INFLUENCE IN REGIONAL ISSUES, PROGRESS IN ESTABLISHING REGIONAL ECONOMIC GROUPINGS, AND GENEROUS AID CONTRIBUTIONS FROM A WIDE RANGE OF DONORS. PROSPECTS ARE FOR CONTINUED ECONOMIC PROBLEMS AS TRANSPORTATION COSTS WILL REMAIN EXTREMELY HIGH, COFFEE PRICES WILL FALL, COFFEE RE-EXPORTS MAY DECLINE,

AND POPULATION CONTINUES TO INCREASE ABOUT THREE PERCENT PER YEAR. CONSENSUS IS THAT NONETHLESS THAT HABYARIMANA IS THE BEST LEADER THE COUNTRY COULD HAVE NOW AND FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE. IN 1978 HE EXPECTS TO TAKE STEPS TOWARD RETURN OF CONSTITUTIONAL RULE, WHICH WILL PROBABLY RESULT IN LEGITIMIZING AND STRENGTHENING HIS POSITION. BUJUMBURA ACTION REQUESTED PARA 6. END SUMMARY.

2. THE STYLE OF THE HABYARIMANA GOVERNMENT

SINCE TAKING POWER IN JULY 1973, HABYARIMANA HAS RULED BY DECREE. THE CIVILIAN LEGISLATURE AND THE REVIEW FUNCTIONS OF SUPREME COURT REMAIN SUSPENDED. NO NATIONAL OR PROVINCIAL ELECTIONS HAVE BEEN SCHEDULED. HOWEVER, THE STYLE OF THE HABYARIMANA GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN PARTICIPATORY, AND STEPS HAVE BEEN PREPARED FOR AN ORDERLY RETURN TO CONSTITUTIONAL RULE. MILITARY MEMBERS OF THE CABINET NUMBER ONLY FOUR OF FIFTEEN, HOLDING THE KEY MINISTRIES OF INTERIOR, FOREIGN AFFAIRS, CIVIL SERVICE/EMPLOYMENT, AND NATIONAL DEFENSE (HELD BY THE PRESIDENT HIMSELF). AT THE TIME OF HIS COUP, HABYARIMANA WAS ALREADY DEFENSE MINISTER AND SENIOR OFFICER IN RWANDAN ARMED FORCES. HE THEREFORE HAD A CLOAK OF LEGITIMACY WHEN HE TOOK OVER GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP, ALL THE MORE SINCE PREVIOUS REGIME WAS WIDELY DISCREDITED AS CORRUPT, INEFFECTUAL, AND EXPLOITATIVE OF ETHNIC TENSIONS. HABYARIMANA PRESENTED HIMSELF WITH CONSIDERABLE JUSTICE AS A UNIFIER, AND HE HAS HELD FIRMLY TO THAT COURSE. ETHNIC TENSIONS ARE REDUCED, THE RULE OF CONFIDENTIAL

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LAW IS RESPECTED, LEGAL OFFICERS ARE INSTRUCTED TO RESPECT HUMAN RIGHTS, THE GOVERNMENT SEEKS TO PROVIDE TRAINING FOR MAGISTRATES, AND GOR EXPECTS TO HOLD HUMAN RIGHTS COLLOQUIUM IN 1978.

THE CHOSEN INSTRUMENT OF THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF THE SECOND RWANDAN REPUBLIC IS THE NATIONAL REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT FOR DEVELOPMENT (MRND), FOUNDED TWO YEARS AGO BY HABYARIMANA, WHO IS ITS PRESIDENT. THE MRND IS CONCEIVED OF NOT (RPT NOT) AS A UNITARY POLITICAL PARTY BUT AS THE EMBODIMENT OF THE RWANDAN STATE, WITH ALL RWANDAN CITIZENS AUTOMATICALLY REGARDED AS "MILITANTS. IT IS DIRECTED BY A CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF SIXTEEN MEMBERS, FIVE OF THEM MILITARY (INCLUDING THE FOUR WHO ARE IN THE CABINET), AND OTHERS INCLUDING TWO OTHER CABINET MINISTERS, THE ARCHBISHOP OF KIGALI, TWO LEADING EDUCATORS, THE GOVERNOR OF THE NATIONAL BANK, THE PROCURER-GENERAL OF THE REPUBLIC, AND TWO WOMEN. THE MRND IS SUPPOSED TO ESTABLISH POLICY FOR THE COUNTRY, AND THE GOVERNMENT IN CARRY IT OUT. A CONSTITUTION TO BE ADOPTED IN 1978 IS EXPECTED TO PROVIDE THAT THE PRESIDENT OF THE MRND WILL BE THE SOLE CANDIDATE FOR PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC. IF THIS PLAN IS CARRIED OUT, HABYARIMANA WILL BE IN A POSITION DURING 1978 TO LEGITIMIZE HIS UNCHALLENGED LEADERSHIP BY ORDERLY, PEACEFUL,

AND CONSTITUTIONAL -- ALBEIT UNIRARY -- MEANS.

THERE ARE ELITIST TENDENCIES IN THE HABARIMANA STYLE, BUT THEY FIT IN WITH RWANDAN CHARACTER AND TRADITIONS. THE MOUNTAINEER MENTALITY OF THE PEOPLE HAS DEVELOPED THROUGH CENTURIES OF AN ETHNIC CASTE SYSTEM IN A GEOGRAPHICALLY DISPERSED, TOTALLY RURAL-PASTORAL SOCIETY. ALTHOUGH TUTSI DOMINATION GAVE WAY TO HUTU MAJORITY CONTROL SHORTLY BEFORE INDEPENDENCE, THE HABIT PERSISTS OF DISCUSSING HARD QUESTIONS ONLY AMONG INSIDERS AND BEHIND CLOSED DOORS. HABYARIMANA BELONGS TO THAT TRADITION, BUT HE IS LEADING THE GOVERNMENT TOWARD GREATER OPENNESS, GREATER TOLERANCE OF DISSENT, AND GREATER PARTICIPATION BY LARGER NUMBERS IN THE DECISIONMAKING PROCESS. ALTHOUGH HE HIMSELF TENDS TO SHY AWAY FROM WIDE-RANGING CONTACTS AND IS MOST AT HOME WITH ARMY BUDDIES, CONFIDENTIAL

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HE TAKES HIS MISSION VERY SERIOUSLY OF OPENING UP THE GOVERNMENT PROCESS TO ALL ELEMENTS OF SOCIETY- INCLUDING THE TUTSIS, OUT-CAST IN THE PREVIOUS GOVERNMENT BUT CAPABLE OF BRINGING GREAT TALENT TO BEAR ON THE COUNTRY'S DEVELOPMENT EFFORT. AT POLICY LEVEL ONE MINISTER AND ONE ENHANCED OFFICER ARE TUTSIS; AND INFORMAL QUOTA SYSTEM KEEPS THE PROPORTION OF TUTSIS IN SENIOR POSITIONS FROM EXCEEDING THEIR 10-15 PERCENT OF GENERAL POPULATION.

3. ECONOMIC POLICY AND DEVELOPMENTS.

THE HABYARIMANA GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN STRIKINGLY SUCCESSFUL AT ATTRACTING FOREIGN ASSISTANCE FROM A WIDE RANGE OF DONORS, PARTLY BECAUSE RWANDA IS LISTED AS ONE OF THE POOREST COUNTRIES.

NOTE BY OC/T: SECTION 2 SERVICED; TO FOLLOW.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 KIGALI 0097

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TO BE MARKETED FROM RWANDA. BUT THE HARDEST PROBLEMS OF THE
RWANDAN SUBSISTENCE ECONOMY -- INADEQUATE FOOD PRODUCTION AND
RAPID POPULATION GROWTH -- REMAIN UNSOLVED. HABARIMANA HAS TAKEN
INITIATIVE IN ORIENTING COUNTRY'S PRIORITIES TO MEANINGFUL
DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL/AGRICULTURE SECTOR; FIVE YEAR PLAN ADOPTED
IN 1977 REFLECTS THIS EFFORT. BUT RESULTS CAN ONLY COME SLOWLY,
IN VIEW OF INTENSITY OF LAND USE AND PRESSURES OF POPULATION
GROWTH. LATTER PROBLEM IS RECOGNIZED, AND SECOND: CHANGE IN CONSER-
VATIVE PUBLIC ATTITUDES HAS BEGUN TOWARDS EVENTUAL POPULATION
GROWTH LIMITATION POLICY, BUT THE PROBLEM IS AGGRAVATED AS TIME
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PASSES, AND A GENUINE SENSE OF URGENCY IS STILL LACKING AMONG
NATIONAL LEADERSHIP. IN THE LOCAL CONTEXT 1977 WAS A PRETTY GOOD
YEAR ECONOMICALLY, BUT FRESH EMERGENCIES ARE INEVITABLE AS SOON
AS ANOTHER DRY SPELL OCCURS, OR WHEN COFFEE PRICES DECLINE
SUBSTANTIALLY, OR WHEN NEIGHBORS SUCCEED IN MARKETING THEIR OWN
COFFEE, OR WHEN ROAD TRAFFIC TO AND FROM THE COAST THROUGH UGANDA
IS MADE MORE DIFFICULT.

4. FOREIGN RELATIONS.

HABYARIMANA'S RECORD IS MOST IMPRESSIVE IN FOREIGN RELATIONS,
ESPECIALLY CONSIDERING THE COUNTRY'S LACK OF STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE
EVEN IN ITS OWN REGION, AND THE LACK OF ANY TRADITION BEFORE
1973 OF INTENSE RELATIONS WITH OUTSIDE, EVEN MORE THAN THE
GOR'S SUCCESS NOTED ABOVE IN ATTRACTING DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE,
THE RWANDANS HAVE BEEN IMPRESSIVE IN ESTABLISHING AND MAINTAINING
THE BEST POSSIBLE RELATIONS WITH DIFFICULT NEIGHBORS. COOPERATION
WITH BURUNDI IS GROWING, AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF ETHNIC SUSPICION

AND VIOLENCE INVOLVING THE PEOPLE OF BOTH COUNTRIES RIGHT UP TO THE PRESENT TIME. RWANDA ALSO CULTIVATES CLOSE RELATIONS WITH ZAIRE AND THOUGH THE INTEREST IS NOT FULLY RECIPROCATED IT HAS PRODUCED SOME HOPEFUL BEGINNINGS, MOST NOTABLY THAT OF THE ECONOMIC COMMUNITY OF GREAT LAKES COUNTRIES (CEPGL-INCLUDING RWANDA, BURUNDI, AND ZAIRE). NORTHERN NEIGHBOR UGANDA IS AT ONCE THE MOST VITAL AND THE MOST DIFFICULT TO DEAL WITH. THE ROAD LINK THROUGH UGANDA TO MOMBASA IS THE ONLY PRACTICAL LAND ROUTE FOR THE GREAT BULK OF TRADE, IN AND OUT OF RWANDA. HABYARIMANA'S RELATIONS WITH THE AMIN GOVERNMENT HAVE BEEN DISTANT BUT CORRECT AND BUSINESSLIKE. RWANDANS ARE CAREFUL NEITHER TO OFFEND AMIN NOR TO SEEM TO ENDORSE HIS GOVERNMENT. IT IS A POLICY BORN OF PAINFUL NECESSITY, BUT CARRIED OUT WITH DIGNITY AND SKILL.

THE OTHER COUNTRY WITH WHOM RWANDA SHARES ITS BORDER,
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TANZANIA, OFFERS THE MOST INTERESTING BILATERAL DEVELOPMENTS IN 1977 -- A SERIES OF HIGH LEVEL, VERY FRIENDLY EXCHANGES OF DELEGATIONS EXPLORING MEANS OF COOPERATION, INCLUDING AN AKAGERA VALLEY DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY (WITH BURUNDI), DEVELOPMENT OF A TRANSPORTATION NETWORK FROM CENTRAL AFRICA TO THE PORT OF DAR ES SALAAM, AND EVEN POSSIBLE IMPLANTATION OF SETTLEMENTS OF RWANDANS IN UNDERPOPULATED AREAS OF TANZANIA. IF POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS PERMIT, THE LONG-TERM FUTURE OF RWANDA'S OPENING TO THE OUTSIDE WORLD MAY LIE THROUGH TANZANIA.

RELATIONS WITH THE U.S. HAVE ALSO BEEN FRIENDLY THE PAST YEAR WAS A HONEYMOON PERIOD WHILE RWANDANS WATCHED THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION'S AFRICAN POLICY TAKE SHAPE. THEY HINTED AT ARMS SUPPLY PROGRAM AND WERE TOLD THAT WAS NOT IN THE CARDS. SO THEY ASKED FOR "NATION-BUILDING" EQUIPMENT FOR THE MILITARY, AND IN DECEMBER WE TURNED THAT REQUEST DOWN TOO. EFFORTS TO INCREASE U.S. DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE HAVE BEEN BOGGED DOWN DESPITE GOOD FAITH ON BOTH SIDES, AND OUR CONTRIBUTION REMAINS MINOR COMPARED TO THOSE OF BELGIUM, FRANCE, FRG, FED, IBRD, UNDP AND EVEN PRC. THUS FAR MUTUAL GOOD WILL HAS KEPT GOR ACCESSIBLE TO US VIEWS, BUT IF THE HIATUS IN NEW U.S. DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE COMMITMENTS GOES ON WE CAN EXPECT RWANDANS TO BECOME COOLER.

5. PROSPECTS FOR POLITICAL STABILITY

THE RWANDAN GOVERNMENT AS A MEANINGFUL ENTITY IS JUST A THIN CRUST ATOP THE DECENTRALIZED RWANDAN SOCIETY, AS SUCH, IT WOULD NOT TAKE MUCH FORCE TO BLOW IT AWAY. BUT THE TREND IS NOT IN THAT DIRECTION. HABYARIMANA IS GENERALLY RECOGNIZED AS DOING AS WELL AS ANYBODY COULD MOBILIZE THE LIMITED RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO ENCOURAGE THE DEVELOPMENT OF A MORE VIABLE, LESS DEPENDENT NATION. HIS PERSONAL BEHAVIOR HAS WON THE RESPECT OF THE PEOPLE--

HIS RELATIVE AUSTERITY, DIGNITY, HARD WORK AND STRAIGHT FORWARD CHARACTER. HIS MILITARY COLLEAGUES ARE SAID TO CHAFE AT HABYARIMANA'S NEGLECT OF THEIR MATERIAL REQUESTS BUT WE SEE NO SIGNS
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THAT OPPOSITION IS TAKING TANGIBLE SHAPE AROUND A RIVAL. ON THE CONTRARY, HABYARIMANA HAS LURED OTHER MILITARY LEADERS TO JOIN HIM IN PUMPING FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AS THE PRIORITY OF PRIORITIES -- AND TO GAMBLE THAT FRIENDLY BEHAVIOR TOWARD NEIGHBORING BURUNDI AND PERHAPS UGANDA WILL FORESTALL POTENTIAL MILITARY THREATS. ANOTHER POTENTIAL SOURCE OF INSTABILITY IS THE RIVALRY BETWEEN DIFFERENT GEOGRAPHIC REGIONS OF THE COUNTRY. NOWADAYS IT CENTERS ON THE PRESIDENT'S GISENYI PROVINCE VERSUS MINISTER OF INTERIOR'S RUHENGERI, WHILE AMBITIOUS PEOPLE FROM ELSEWHERE ARE JEALOUS OF BOTH OF THOSE GROUPS. BUT HERE TOO HABYARIMANA SEEMS AWARE OF THE POTENTIAL DANGER AND TRIES TO BALANCE FAVORS TO MINIMIZE RESENTMENT.

THE EXERCISE OF PROPOSING, ADOPTING, AND PUTTING INTO EFFECT A NEW CONSTITUTION WILL REVEAL MUCH ABOUT THE CHANGES FOR RWANDA TO DEVELOP A GOVERNMENT SYSTEM STRONG ENOUGH TO DEAL WITH THE CRUELLY DIFFICULT PROBLEMS IT MUST FACE. THE ODDS FAVOR FAILURE AND DISASTER, BUT THE LEADERSHIP OF HABYARAMANA APPEARS TO US TO PROVIDE THE BEST CHANCE OF SUCCESS. OUR ASSESSMENT IS THAT HE IS LIKELY TO REMAIN IN CHARGE TO LEAD THIS EFFORT FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE.

6. FOR BUJUMBURA: PLEASE MAKE THIS MESSAGE AVAILABLE FOR AID ASST. ADMINISTRATOR BUTCHER TO READ AS BRIEFING MATERIAL FOR HER VISIT TO RWANDA.
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